

Health Tips for the Office

Pesky germs spread inadvertently among co-workers, particularly during the cold and flu season. The good news is that employees can do a lot to minimize exposure for themselves and their co-workers. Of course, if you're really sick, especially with a fever over 101 degrees F, the best way to keep it to yourself is to stay home. Here's a road map to navigate some of the most common trouble spots lurking in boardrooms, work cubicles and office kitchens.

The Conference Room

If a colleague has sniffles or other cold and flu symptoms, it may be best to curtail standard corporate etiquette—the traditional handshake. That's because cold and flu germs are commonly transmitted through human touch or droplet spread. The germs have to enter your body via the mouth, nose or eyes, so frequent hand and refraining from touching your face are the best ways to avoid colds and flu.

Use common courtesy if you're the one who's sick. Wash your hands before any physical contact, or just let people know you are ill. They'll appreciate your honesty.

Offices and Other Work Areas

Telephones, computer keyboards, and papers can harbor infectious viruses and bacteria, although you're more likely to get sick through human contact. Most of these organisms don't survive for long periods of time outside the body (typically no more than a few minutes), but it is smart to wipe down office equipment or avoid sharing it.

Office Kitchens and Parties

Food-borne illnesses, typically the result of improper food handling and storage, cause fever, stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhea. When bringing food to the office, keep items properly refrigerated, heated, and/or wrapped. Throw out leftovers within a few days. If in doubt, don't eat it.

Just as day care centers are a prime health hazard for children, the workplace is one of the most likely places where adults can contract air- and food-borne diseases, so it's worth your while to use good hygiene and prevention techniques.

Keep yourself healthy!